

# A CRITIQUE OF PURE NIHILISM IN ISLAMIC COSMOLOGY

*( kashf al-Mahjub)*

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*The congregation had been long dismissed; and except three persons in the court, there was no body seen: the cleric with flowing beard, the professor and a stranger, whose countenance and clothes, in his demeanor told, that he had been some visionary Darwaysh, with his wide contemplative eyes as fixed in distant skies. It was a rare conference between conservative piety, secular reason and solid gnosis. There the Professor had been convincing fruitlessly the Cleric,*

*THE PROFESSOR* :The world has survived the superstitions of the dark ages; the age of faith has passed long. Science has exploded the myth of the old woman spinning her wheel on the moon.

**THE CLERIC:** Nothing has essentially changed. All that looks new is only apparent. The whole progress science has made, is only artful ingenuity of involving the same reality more effectively and in beneficial manner. The experiments performed in laboratories remain true for a while in their application, and then repudiated by some next hypothesis.

*THE PROFESSOR* : It is sheer ridiculous to circumvent the achievements of science in every field of life and the world. Scientists have invoked biotechnical revolution by creating new species in the living part of existence. The marvel of Recombinant art of Genetics, has at least rivaled, if not replaced, the hitherto unique claim of religion, that God alone possesses the authority to create.

**THE CLERIC:** Your boast of creative science betrays your enthusiasm only; since it is just art of inventiveness. You should have discriminated between creation and invention. Creation is a spiritual act of bringing something into being from Nothing: which you are mistaking for technical manipulation. So scientific invention is just re-arrangement of the already created things.

*THE PROFESSOR* : Your refined definitions must have significance for poets, in rhetoric and letters; however in reality there exists nothing without matter, out of time and space.

**THE CLERIC:** So you allege, that without time, matter and space, there is concept of nothing!

*THE PROFESSOR* : Unquestionably !

**THE CLERIC:** What is the nature of your ultimate matter, without which existence is nothing?

*THE PROFESSOR* : It is pure extension.

**THE CLERIC:** But extension of what ?

*THE PROFESSOR* : Extension in itself. I mean extension from nothing; extension of no thing.

**THE CLERIC:** Is an extension-in-itself not a notion, empty of idea? It suggests however, that you know nothing beyond extension; because your science comes here to an end in cul-de-sac. Actually your all reason is suspended to know, what to do with your extension without its origin. Nevertheless it is insensibly

acknowledged by you that your extension-in-itself is, because of its being extended from nothing.

*THE PROFESSOR* : What does it all mean?

**THE CLERIC:** Where all your science ends in nothing; thence proceeds the creation ab initio. This emergence of all extension from Nothing is the basic concept of creation, whence God creates. Here is the fundamental difference between your scientific schemes of invention and the creative act of God alone, from Nothing.

*THE PROFESSOR* : I am a scientist, not philosopher. I just know that, what is proved; from which I derive universal law for uniform application to solve the enigmas of the world.

**THE CLERIC:** This universal generalization of laws that you make can not explain the Origin from which the evolution of the Cosmos could be known. Without knowing the Origin of the cosmos into being from Nothing, all your science of Cosmology is no more than “ Extrapolation” of your transient hypotheses.

*THE PROFESSOR* : Is it not the same problem for religion too ?

**THE CLERIC:** Not at all. Rather God commanded everything out of Nothing, through His Will. Whatever He Wants, he just says, “ KUN”(to be); and It is there, “ FAYAKUN”. This is the secret that no law is authority in itself; rather is under the command of God. Material phenomena are just manifestations of His transcendental authority. So this Nothing is no more than the Will of God; His creative Will: before which no Matter, no Time, no space has authority to be-in-itself.

*THE PROFESSOR* : I must concede, that there is no knowledge in science about the origin of matter. The Big Bang Theory is its ironic confession only. Because there is Nothing: that Nothing, our science dependent on matter, time and space, can never know. It seems that Nothing is just like the Infinity, which we can logically involve in our all rational demonstrations, though its true nature remains mysterious for every endeavor to apprehend . It is logically perceptible then, that

there is Nothing in similarity to Infinity, if we place it in anteriority as the Origin of cosmos.

**THE CLERIC:** I must admire, how aptly your fertile understanding has defined Nothing as Anterior Infinity. But if science wants to as well know the diversity of laws in nature, then this sense of Anterior Infinity must be improve into Will Of God. As soon as this atomic nature of laws in science is submitted to The Will of God, science is converted into religion of sacred reason.

**THE STRANGER:** Gentlemen! The concord that you have obtained of "*Creatio ex nihilo*"; despite all your candor, and rigorous prosecution; is true neither to the principle of science, nor the spirit of faith.

*THE PROFESSOR :* What do you mean by, *THE SCIENTIFIC SPIRIT OF RELIGION?*

**THE CLERIC:** Does Allah not create out of Nothing ?

**THE STRANGER:** No !

**THE CLERIC:** Do you know, or want to demolish the cosmological principle of Islam?

**THE STRANGER:** Why should I that, which is Islamic: and why should I not, which is falsely attributed to Islam; because *Ex nihilo, None est.* Allah says so expressly in Quran, that He Has created signs in heavens for our deliberation to reflect and discover His Imperishable Face and Color. Then how you can reduce this scientific spirit of Islam to nothing in your imputation to HIS WILL the saying, "Creatio ex nihilo"? Such nihilistic creed is the insidious poison for subversion of the intellectual inquiry in Islam and Cosmology. Such patristic interpretations have been blight upon the flourishing of intellect, the spiritual reasoning in Islam.

**THE CLERIC:** How can you reproach me for distorting the meaning of creation in Islam?

**THE STRANGER:** You did say, “ Allah created the cosmos out of nothing”. Am I correct?

THE CLERIC: Yes.

**THE STRANGER:** Do you think that a spoken word is nothing ?

THE CLERIC: If it is absurd, it is nothing.

**THE STRANGER:** I have not asked about the importance of the word.

THE CLERIC: Then every word has its being from the speaker.

**THE STRANGER:** Well, have you studied Quran ?

THE CLERIC: I have imbibed it in early childhood; and enjoy the honor of being *Hafiz!*

**THE STRANGER:** I have often felt astonishment that when, Allah has enjoined the faithful to observe, reflect and comprehend his signs; then why people learn the Holy Text without deliberation, without understand? This is Book of Wisdom, “*Kitāb al-Hikma*”, or rhapsody for recitation ? Anyhow now tell me please ,” Is the word ‘KUN’ spoken by God, Allah, is nothing in its nature”?

THE CLERIC: Why is it nothing? It is prima facie a potent word in imperative form.

**THE STRANGER:** What association is suggested by this word?

THE CLERIC: Allah created through His Word. He said, “ To be”; and, “It was there.” KUN! FAYAKUN.

**THE STRANGER:** Hitherto you had been haranguing that Allah had created all ex nihilo: now you are quite differently asserting the command of God in His Will through the Word Kun as the cause of creation. Is it not contradiction in your eyes that you are now identifying the *Kun* with Nothing?

THE CLERIC: ( *Totally disconcerted* ) How ?

**THE STRANGER:** First you had so diligently prosecuted against the uninspired professor, that God had created out of Nothing; and now you are telling that creation came out of the God's word 'KUN' ! What a irony of turn!

THE CLERIC: There is no inconsistency under the apparent conflict. The nature of KUN is just instrumental. Before KUN there was nothing *a priori*.

**THE STRANGER:** ( *Sardonic smile plays on his face* ) Your Nothing is very elusive like that fish escaping from the impatient paws of hungry bear. Kindly define the nature of this Nothing, which is still ambivalent for me.

THE CLERIC: There is no time, no space, no matter. Neither there is existence, nor any existent.

**THE STRANGER:** Very astonishing!

THE CLERIC: Why?

**THE STRANGER:** Because in likeness to professor you want to say that without time, space and matter, there can neither be Being nor beings. Would you agree that you have reproduced in enthusiasm only the world vision of the professor?

THE CLERIC: No ! The timeless, spaceless, immaterial Nothing is just the WILL OF GOD, that invokes into being through KUN.

**THE STRANGER:** Thanks for making your point lucid for me; that it is Voluntarism of *A'shria school*.

THE CLERIC: Exactly.

**THE STRANGER:** Would you tell me something about dreams?

**THE CLERIC:** Why not? There are two types of dreams. True dreams not only reveal the facts, they can even soothsay. The prophet Joseph had been endowed with the gift of dreams' interpretation.

**THE STRANGER:** So you acknowledge that there is a true world of dreams, where we can walk, talk, hear and see. A world of authentic experience.

**THE CLERIC:** No doubt!

**THE STRANGER:** Do you think there is any time, any space, any matter, in your world of dreams? You said yourself that due to strong connection between our actual and visionary world, even events were anticipated in our dreams?

**THE CLERIC:** You have plunged me in difficult situation.

**THE STRANGER:** Some moments before you had been contending that, there was no world without three measures of time, space and matter. Now you are telling us so assuredly that not only there is an independent world of dreams; but there exists an effective bond of anticipation for our blind world in the superior realm of visions. You have pent us up in perplexity.

**THE CLERIC:** Though the realm of dreams is reality; but before 'KUN' , there had been Nothing: neither time, nor space, nor matter. It was an abysmal Void.

**THE STRANGER:** Would you allow me to call this world of dreams, where there is no matter, no space, no time, AN UTOPIA, a world nowhere; a world of nothing, NA KUJABAD ?

**THE CLERIC:** I do not disagree.

**THE STRANGER:** So you have admitted so graciously that, in addition to our empirical world of existence, there are existents, non-spatial, non-temporal, non-material. They are the residents of Nothingness: they dwell in the world of Nothingness. Though they are Non-beings from our own cosmic perspective; yet

are properly existential in their supra-cosmic Nothingness, from where they often inspire us, meet us, in our dreams.

**THE CLERIC:** ( *In quandary* ) What implication you are trying to bring out through your discourse of dreams?

**THE STRANGER:** My effort has been to invoke for your understanding, a world of images. A world that has an independent existence, where spatio-temporal dimension of materialism is invalidated according to your own definition of Nothing. That world of images is supra-sensory, and inaccessible to those who are addicted to the inferior measures of time, space and matter for their total concept of ontology.

**THE CLERIC:** I have a question for you. After exploring beyond into world of dreams, what then is implied in the word of God : ‘KUN FAYAKUN ?

**THE STRANGER:** You have informed me yourself that Allah used ‘KUN’ as “ MEANS” to manifest the Cosmos from Nothing. Upto here I concur with you: but my dispute with you is, that this Nothing is not Nihil. This Nothing in reality is a proper world in-itself of supra sensory beings, where our spatial and temporal measures are rendered as not-needed ; because they are no more applicable, can find, nor appreciate anything valid in a sphere where there is nothing for them.

Now from this Non-temporal, Non-spatial, Non-material sense of Nothingness, Allah elicits through *the Word of KUN*, our tangible dimension of existence. Allah Has cast **THE VEIL OF THE WORD**. Your error has been, like the professor, that you could not penetrate, you could not intellectually perceive the reality, beyond the veil dropped on our sensuous experience of this world.

**THE CLERIC:** You have opened the reality before my veiled eyes. I saw; but I could not see. I saw only letters of Quran. I could not remove the *hijab* cast by God in His WORD OF KUN upon the eyes of all like me; and now I can see, only a sage is blessed to raise and behold the Continuum of Being in every thing. Allow me to say, that this is the way called *Kashf al-Mahjub* !



*THE PROFESSOR* : You have ripped up so consistently the veil of Nihilism between two dichotomic worlds. How can you reconcile “the veiled chasm” between these two exclusive worlds, when in the one there is no time, no space, no matter; which are essential for the other? How it is possible to see Continuum of Being between these two repugnant domains?

**THE STRANGER:** Before answering your worthy question, let it be clear by me that ‘Nothing’ be not taken for ‘Nihilism’. The latter is only the blinding veil cast upon the eyes of the ignorant; because they can never brook the scenes of Beauty, Love and Truth.

Continuum simply means that the nature of time, space, and matter is only transformed. The world-experience is transmuted. Once you have understood the transformative nature of time and space, neither Newtonian nor Kantian, the whole dilemma of dichotomy shall evaporate. This transformative principle in time, space, and matter is the truth in continuum of Being. All science in the sacred depth of its nature is, the art of unveiling the God in the Continuum of Existence on multiple levels of inner transformation.

*THE PROFESSOR* : How this transformative principle is scientifically demonstrable in the philosophy of the word KUN?

**THE STRANGER:** As I have recently asserted, so “The Science” is a sacred concept of creation, in contradistinction to “Scientism”; which is deplorably confined to the truncated level of procrustean materialism. This mutilated science has lost every claim to be ‘Scientific’: it is only ‘scientistic’. It can not intellectually intuit beyond the infinite veil of Nothing; due to rational blindness of the eye that is destitute of inner vision!

To understand easily the Continuum; how it is related with The WORD ‘KUN’ of God; it is mandatory to know the theory of knowledge behind science; to strip away the blindfold tied upon the modern myopic scientism.

All science in its reasoning and methodology is founded on the Category Of Causality: that has been so consummately analyzed by the Stagirite Master into Four Types: 1.Efficient 2. Formal 3.Material 4. and the End CAUSE. The first two, and the crowning last type of Causality, have been abjured by the Faustian nature of scientism. In its misosophic cerebral activity has forfeited its every right to penetrate the veil of material cosmology to behold the superior side and levels of efficient and formal causes , to be qualified for attaining the purpose of being in the End. After its reduction of the three other Causes to Nihilism; its sheer ignorance has complacently rejected with fools' pride the three ontological levels of Existence. Why ? Because this rationalistic scientism does not know how to transform itself into trans-rational worlds through intellection.

*THE PROFESSOR* : But how this tetrad spectrum of Causality can be discovered in the true nature of science?

**THE STRANGER:** Do you know something about Pygmalion ?

*THE PROFESSOR* : Yes! He was an inspired Greek sculptor, quite mythological. He makes a statue of his ideal woman of beauty. He falls in love. He prays earnestly from the depths of his heart to the goddess Aphrodite. She breathes life in his beloved figure of the extraordinary fair sex.

**THE STRANGER:** Oh professor, your description is vividly moving. I had no idea that you have heart in your rib cage. Then tell me please, do you see what is there in the desire of Pygmalion, which prompted him to bring her out in the form of touch for actual bursts of bliss and joy ?

*THE PROFESSOR* : I see there was her idea in his mind; that became colorful image in his soul; before he produced it into her material body.

**THE STRANGER:** For what End ?

*THE PROFESSOR* : Obviously for consummation in love.

**THE STRANGER:** I have given my reply in your own words. I only assisted you to bring in light what had been secreted obliviously in your soul.

*THE PROFESSOR :* I have not understood what you are saying: kindly make it all explicit for me.

**THE STRANGER:** Long before making with his own chisel and strokes, her idea reposed in him deep. Impulse of life made her image in his soul, to receive all colors of taste and excitement for sighs. Impelled in passion to dissolve at the end of love in secure peace, he designed her urgently from stone piece.

*THE PROFESSOR :* I feel , am listening from you the song of Ovid !

**THE STRANGER:** When you talked of Pygmalion, my own cause of creative transformation was metamorphosed. Let us come to the cruel world and its affairs again. We can see that in Soul, idea and image both, are anterior to the body. Body is made, when the Efficient cause of soul, through imagination brings the idea into liveliness. Soul then invests them with sensuous material to achieve her End. In this manner, the body in material world is intimately concatenated from the metaphysical *a priori* worlds of ideas and images, to the transphysical End cause. Material phenomenon is only a part in the transformative motion of being from idea to image; from image to body; and body to the end of all cause. If science wants to be legitimate, then it must recognize her Soul, the true FATHER of every form and definitive cause, in all her material affairs of the world.

Without this authentic recognition of the creator on Cosmic level, the whole material concept of cosmos is Bastard scientism of endlessly drifting of Epicurus.

**THE CLERIC:** You have suggested in your example of the artist Pygmalion, that he was too creator like God.

*THE PROFESSOR :* Yes; both are creators. And God is the Creator *par excellence*. The artist is creator in imitation. The First uses His Word 'KUN' . The last employs the

hammer and the cutter. Difference is of quality. The Principle that both employ is the same: as they transform *a priori* idea first into image, then in body to achieve their purpose at the end.

**THE CLERIC:** Please make clear the mode, how does God transform like science in His act of creation?

**THE STRANGER:** Allah said, 'KUN', to be; and it became, "FAYAKUN". Here the act of Being is Imperative! Allah is clearly commanding here. The command is implying *a priori* presence of living existents in the pre-cosmic world of life.

**THE CLERIC:** And what does 'FAYAKUN' denote?

**THE STRANGER:** The ideas and images from their formal level of existence are transformed into corporeal beings.

**THE CLERIC:** You want to say, that the true scientist like an artist is creator in the image of God. Both invoke into material existence from pleroma of ideas and images. And this is the legitimate theory of knowledge upon which science is *de jure* founded.

**THE STRANGER:** Yes. Allah is Merciful; He is above the need to be envious of His own creature! The man is His vicegerent, not rival. He is His faithful representative of all attributes. In Quran Allah says," He is *Ahsan al-Khaliqin*." In this terse expression, He is absolutely not claiming, to be the sole Creator. He says, that He is the Creator *par excellence* amongst the creators. Why thus the artist, *al-Musawwar*, can not be one of the creators ? Does he not invoke as well into material form that which had not been before ?

Second, we saw, how the Imperative Act of being, in the Word 'KUN'; proclaims the scientific cosmology of Islam. Allah transforms *a priori* existents into cosmic garb. So the Just God has sentenced the essence of Islamic cosmology very pithily in the verse of *Sura al-Qamar* ( 54:49) : "*Innaa kulla shay-'in khalagnaahu*

*bi-qadar* ". "We bestowed habiliments ( *k h u l k a t* ) upon everything according to its worth."

So Allah has only provided material dress to *a priori existents* according to their merits. This is the mode of His Justice in divine transformation, where He has no need to impose His Will in the name of Nihilism. What was that Measure for merits in pleroma? It is not our theme this time.

*After this the sable clouds from East, with intoxicating cool breeze, thundered in the tongue of admonition to dismiss the symposium before pouring.*

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